



## Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources **Budget Briefing Fact Sheet**

### TOPIC: THE RUFFED GROUSE & WOODCOCK STAMP PROGRAM

#### **BACKGROUND**

In an effort to maintain a resource that you care about, the Department of Natural Resources looked for innovative ways to secure the future of ruffed grouse and woodcock populations in Wisconsin. The Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Stamp will help ensure that these species will be around for everybody to enjoy for generations to come.

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#### **How much will the stamp cost?**

The Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Stamp will cost \$10.00.

#### **Are all hunters required to purchase the stamp?**

Those who wish to hunt ruffed grouse or woodcock, who are the age of 16 years or older, will be required to purchase the stamp. Also, those who do not hunt but are interested in the conservation of these species or are collectors may purchase the stamp.



#### **How many people hunt these species?**

According to information obtained from the small game harvest, about 100,000 people hunt ruffed grouse and woodcock in Wisconsin.

#### **What will Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock Stamp Fund money be spent on?**

All money collected from stamp sales will be put into a dedicated account and will not be used for anything that is not described in statutory language as an authorized purpose. Therefore, the money will be used for projects that will help preserve these species. Some of the activities that will help achieve this goal include habitat restoration and development.



#### **Who may apply for stamp fund money?**

Some examples of groups that might apply for stamp funds include conservation groups, county forest administrators, national forest supervisors, and the DNR. Projects that include cost sharing (obtaining money or matching funding from other sources) will be given priority in order to stretch stamp fund money and make the program more efficient. Some potential partners for these projects include the Ruffed Grouse Society, Wisconsin Woodland Owner's Association, and county and national forests.

**Will there be an actual stamp that is created?** Yes. The goal is to have the inaugural stamp selected in time for the 2006 license year.

**Will this stamp be included in the Conservation Patron License?** Yes, this stamp will be included in the Conservation Patron License.

# Why This Stamp is Needed

## *Value*

The ruffed grouse and woodcock are both valuable species to the state. Having been hunted in the state since the 1800s, they are a part of Wisconsin's great hunting tradition. Wisconsin has some of the best ruffed grouse hunting opportunities found in the United States, drawing out of state hunters annually from all over the country. Woodcock viewing in spring is a popular activity and Park Falls, Wisconsin is known as the "Ruffed Grouse Capital of the World."

## *Decline*



This stamp is important to these species because they both have an uncertain future if we do not intervene to slow or stop current trends. Woodcock have recently been identified in Wisconsin's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan as a Species of Greatest Concern. Habitat that is critical to woodcock, young forests or shrubland habitats, are in decline throughout the state. In Wisconsin, woodcock populations are down 39% since 1968. These issues are complicated by the fact that 80% of primary woodcock breeding areas in the United States are under private ownership, which means an uncertain future for woodcock.

Ruffed grouse, which is an extremely popular native upland game bird, has similar problems. Aspen, its preferred habitat, has declined 44% since 1936. Over the next several decades, projections indicate that the habitat that ruffed grouse depend on will continue to decline unless management efforts increase.



## *Funding Two Birds with One Stamp...*

Both the woodcock and the ruffed grouse share similar habitat requirements, primarily early successional forests, which offer excellent protection from predators. The department is developing a single stamp for ruffed grouse and woodcock in an effort to efficiently maintain healthy, wild populations of both of these species. In recent years, the DNR has not been able to dedicate scarce resources to these species and even had to rely on a conservation group to fund last year's annual ruffed grouse survey.

# Potential Projects

*Some projects that stamp fund money could be used for include \**

- Conduct annual population monitoring of ruffed grouse and woodcock
- Regeneration of aspen, alder, and oak habitats
- Openings maintenance
- Grouse/woodcock hunter education
- Provide training and educational programs on young forest management for land managers, consultants, and private landowners
- Develop and maintain trail systems for hunting opportunities including barrier free trail systems